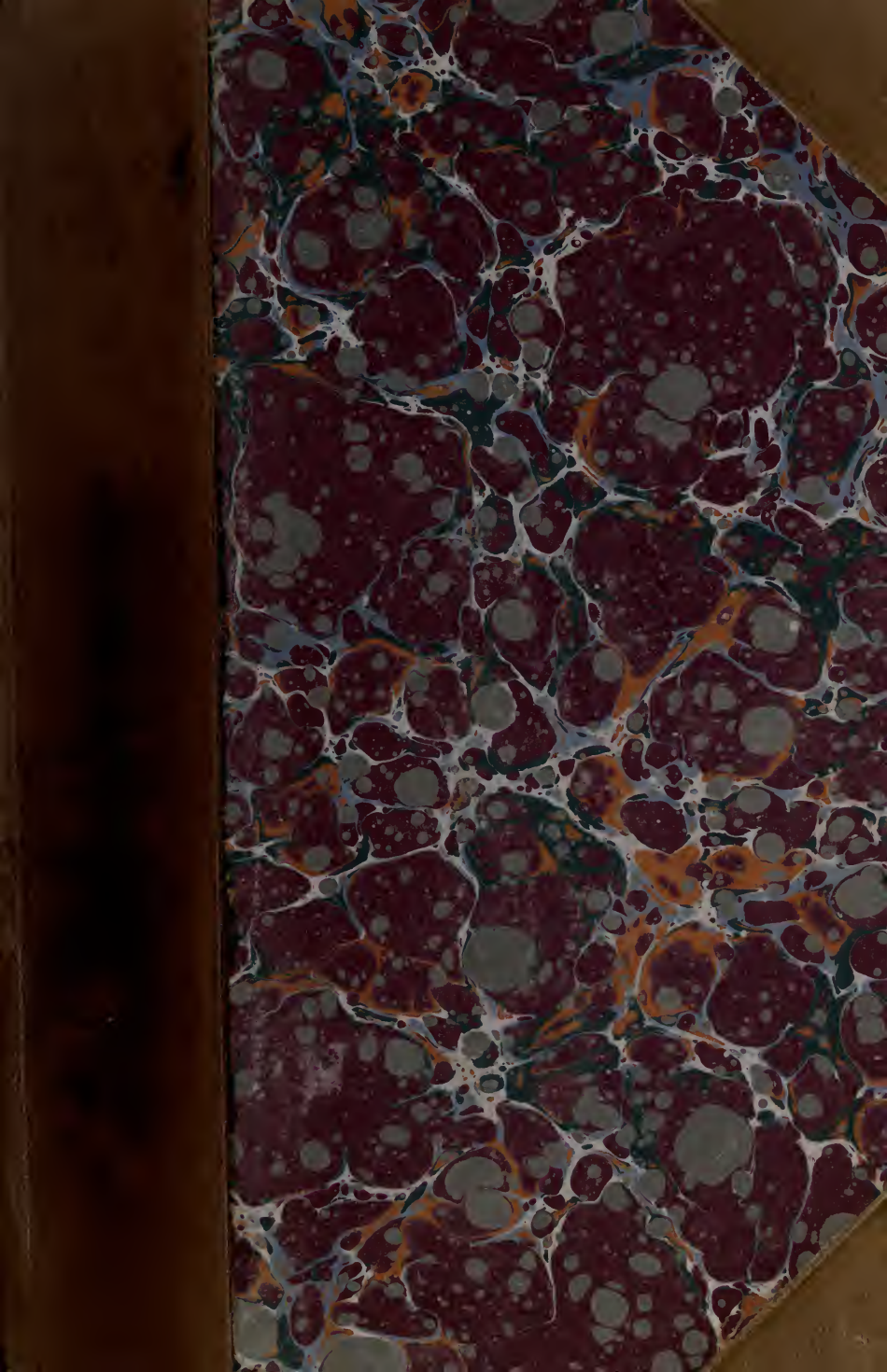




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Octave Sermons.

S. BARNABAS.

Feast of S. Matthew

1850.

PREACHED BY THE

VENERABLE ARCHDEACON MANNING.

SERMON I.

SACRIFICE OF SELF THE PROOF OF LOVE.

S. JOHN, XV, 13.

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY
DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

WE are met to celebrate the consecration of this sanctuary to the worship of the ever-blessed Trinity, and in memory of S. Barnabas, the apostle and martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a noble work, nobly conceived, and as nobly carried to its end; a work for God and for His poor, wrought out of the costliest gifts, and with the most skilful art, in splendour and symmetry, in stateliness and beauty.

In the gospel read on this festival, the Church brings before us the self-oblation of our Divine Master as the example of His servant: "Greater love hath no man than this,

that a man lay down his life for his friends". S. Barnabas, true to this law of love, laid down, first, his substance, then life itself, in obedience to the example of his Lord. The law of love in him became the law of self-denial and the law of self-oblation; he gave all for Christ's sake, and now has found all again in His kingdom. But let us rise from the charity of the servant to the love of the Master; let us trace the stream upward to the fountain, and ascend from the blood of the martyr to the Passion of the Son of God: "Greater love hath no man than this"; no, not all created beings, for none ever so loved man as He that made the world; greater proof of love could no man shew than this, for see who He is that so laid down His life, and how this mystery of love was accomplished.

Who is He but the Eternal Love? The Eternal Love laid down His life for us; for who spoke these words but the everlasting Son of God, and God is love: "I am that I am"; the uncreated life is God, the uncreated wisdom is God, and the uncreated love is God; such

as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost ; the Father is love, the Son love, and the Holy Ghost love,—for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are One in all things, and coequal, save only the relations which constitute their divine personality ; therefore the Son is love, and the uncreated love laid down His life for our sake. But how did He fulfil this divine mystery ? In creation GOD had already given all that was communicable to a creature ; He shed abroad the gift of life from His own uncreated being, and called into existence the orders of angels and of man. Upon man He stamped His own image, and bestowed on him the gift of His Spirit ; but beyond this the divine nature was incommunicable. The Divine love had imparted all that a fallen being could receive ; GOD had no more to give that man had capacity to receive ; and yet the Eternal had not satisfied the boundless desire of revealing His unsearchable love. To redeem, GOD must needs give more, even Himself. But how ? He must lay down His life ; and yet the eternal life could

not be laid down ; it is necessary and infinite. Therefore He laid aside His glory ; He left His heavenly court ; He put off His majesty ; all that He could lay aside as GOD, He laid down for us ; and because, as GOD, He could lay down no more, He took to himself what before He could not have,—a created life. In the womb of the ever-Virgin Mary, from the time of the annunciation at Nazareth, the Godhead and the manhood were united in One Person, never to be divided. The Eternal Love was made man ; He received somewhat more that He could give, and, being made man, He spoiled Himself of all which, as man, He had received : He laid aside home and rest, and the affections which men count dearest ; He gave himself to a life of toil, to suffering and solitude, to weariness and travel, without substance or possession, abode or a shelter,—“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” At the last He gave Himself into the hands of sinners, to be betrayed, bound, and led away. On the hill

of Calvary He laid down His raiment, His last and only possession, except life itself, and gave Himself to be nailed upon the cross; upon the cross He laid down even His life for us, giving up the Ghost, and surrendering His body to be laid for us in the grave,—“Greater love hath no man than this.”

Because in the inaccessible light He had only the array of divine glory, therefore He came down to array Himself in the stole of patience; and now that Love has ascended once more to the bosom of the Father, humility is among the Divine perfections, and human sympathy is in GOD; the uncreated Love, clothed in our manhood, and encompassed with our human affections, is most high “in the glory of GOD the Father,” now once more to descend upon us in the effusions of grace.

Such is the source of our regeneration. The eternal love of GOD is the fountain of creation: the eternal love in GOD and Man is the fountain of regeneration. The everlasting love, in pity upon the children of a fallen race, born in spiritual death,—and because they are

dead in sin,—for the merits of the Incarnate Son, descending upon them by the power and office of the Holy Ghost. Of this divine mystery of grace, baptism is the visible sacrament; both the sign and the instrument. By baptism we are brought under the power of a divine action, within the office of the Holy Ghost; by whom we are admitted into the fellowship of the ever-blessed Trinity. It is by the in-dwelling of the Spirit that we receive remission of sins through the blood-shedding of the Son, and through Him are adopted to be children of the Father. The action is one, but the grace of the office threefold. This is the gift of our regeneration, or free grace sovereignly bestowed, whereby the beginnings and capacities of faith, and hope, and love, are infused into us. We are thereby reunited to the love of God through the Incarnate Son. It becomes to us the very element in which we live. We are encompassed by it as by the light of heaven. The love of Jesus Christ, infinite as God, boundless as man, is the life of our spiritual life.

But to what end was this great mystery

accomplished? Why should the Divine love reveal itself by ways so humbling and so sharp,—so full of sacrifice and passion?

First, that He might make atonement for our sins, reconciling GOD and man by a Divine justification: and next, that He might exhibit a mighty spiritual attraction, to draw the hearts of sinners from this world of sin unto Himself, reconciling our hearts and wills to GOD. It is His love working in us which perfects our salvation.

From this, let us learn some great truths of the spiritual life.

First, we may see, that not to perceive this Divine love is spiritual death. Holy angels live by the love of GOD. They are united to Him by intense perception of His eternal goodness. It is their home, the fountain of all their energies, the end of all their service.

At creation, man also lived by the love of GOD. He was quickened and sustained by a sense of the Divine goodness. What, then, has extinguished the perception? At the fall, love departed;—sin brought fear, and fear

estrangement, and estrangement insensibility. As the soul deprived itself of the endowments of the Spirit, it became motionless and cold towards GOD. It lost both capacity and sense to perceive the Divine mind. The soul in man, as it became unspiritual, became also unloving, and its perceptions were deadened. At first, when Adam heard the voice of GOD, he hid himself among the trees of the garden. His first-born, after he had slain his brother, could meet the gaze of the Divine presence with a fallen countenance, and ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The soul of man was hardened into boldness and insensibility: sin had shed death upon it, and its faculties were perverted.

Now, although, by the grace of regeneration, the capacity to perceive the love of GOD is restored, yet few are to be found who live under a sense of it. And why? Because, by actual sin they again deaden the restored capacity to perceive it. A single sin will make great havoc in the spiritual nature. Just as by one sin man fell, and all died in him, and

the whole nature of man became spiritually blind and cold,—so by one wilful sin, the regenerate change the whole state and course of their soul before God. Take some examples, as suggestions for your own self-examination.

Some sins are according to the order of nature,—as sins of vehement passion; some contrary to it,—as sins of malice or deliberate ill-intent; and these are the most destructive to the spiritual condition of the soul.

For instance, one wilful act of deliberate malignity so perverts the soul, as to destroy its affinity with the love of God. The bias and inclination, the spirit and the very structure of the heart, are changed and alienated from God.

Hardly less fatal are sins, even single sins, of vehement passion,—as one sin of impurity, by which the whole soul is cast down from its moral level. It falls into an abasement, altogether new and unlike its former state. Yesterday it was unstained; to-day soiled to its inmost heart. One sin, and the wreck is com-

plete. What a change in the whole moral nature ; what deadening of conscience ; what depression of mind ; what hardening of heart ; what petrification of the natural sympathies and affections !

And so, too, where one sin of wrath has had its full swing and sway. One ungoverned, self-abandoned burst of prolonged and deliberate anger will shatter both self-control and self-respect. A depressing sense of guilt makes the angry soul to shrink with irritation from the love of GOD.

But, if possible, the indulgence of jealousy is more destructive still. Like a hot parching wind over a fruitful land it burns its path along, withering all high motives, drying up all generous impulses, searing the conscience, and making even goodness hateful—and that because it is good. One such sin deadens the soul, so that the love of our Divine Lord falls powerless upon it.

The same effects follow upon lesser sins, if they be habitual ; as sins of pride—intellectual, worldly, or spiritual. The intoxicating

self-complacency of a proud heart inflates, deludes, and hardens it. A refined selfishness winds itself about a proud soul, and confines it within its own personal aims. Nothing is cared for but what ministers to self: all things are measured by it: and love perishes where self reigns.

Or, to take one more and less suspected sin, that of sloth, which in its operation is so negative and passive, that many die in it without suspecting their disease. What is spiritual sloth, but the lukewarmness and the languor of a soul without sense of the love of God. It sinks into its own self-indulgence, and abdicates the gift and power of self-mastery and self-command.

All these quench the life of the soul, impoverish and deaden its capacities. And what is the state of a soul without sense of God's love, but practical atheism? For atheism is a moral condition. As faith in God is a spiritual consciousness, so unconsciousness of God's love is to be without God in the world. And this cold, darkened habit of soul is the prelude

of the outer darkness, where all who shall be separated from God will have their portion for ever.

There are abroad at this day some who deny the eternity of punishment. They denounce it as vindictive, and contradictory to the character of God. They say, if God is love, how shall He punish eternally?—Shallow reasoners, without faith or insight into the realities of the spiritual world. The eternity of punishment is founded on a Divine necessity. There is no need of the outpouring of just retribution upon sinners. They lay up eternal punishment for themselves. Though there were no worm that dieth not, nor fire unquenchable, yet a soul without love would endure eternal pain. For the variance of a sinful will with the will of God is changeless as God is unchangeable. The eternal contradiction of these two immutabilities is an eternity of punishment. Eternal blindness of heart; redeeming love known, but not felt; the soul with its sight bandaged; the beatific vision lost for ever: this is the very sting of eternal torment.

Another truth we may also learn from this,—namely, that the restored perception of the Divine love is the spring of all holiness. What is the holiness of angels, or the perfection of saints, but union with God in love? What but this union of love, is the perfection of the mystical body of Christ? What is our sanctification but consciousness of His love dwelling in us and presiding over our whole spiritual life? What is conversion, but love overpowering and beating down a sinner in the career of sin? What is repentance, but the same love subduing and confounding the heart with a sense of its own ingratitude? What is perseverance but love sustaining our love unto the end? What is devotion, but His love uniting our love in conscious fellowship unto Himself? All this springs from the consciousness of the personal love of Him who laid down His life for us, descending into our hearts. It is only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that our blind and senseless hearts are enlightened and quickened to this perception. The faculties of our regenerate

life, must be awakened and unfolded by the active consciousness of faith and the indwelling power of the Spirit of God. As He works in us, the whole mind, heart, and will turn to the Son of God by the attraction of His love as God and man. They are the most deeply sanctified, who most vividly perceive it; and they are the least under the power of His Spirit, who have the faintest perception of His love. All the graces of the soul spring from it, and are strong or weak in the measure in which His love is consciously felt by us.

This shews us further, that if we would feel this Divine love, we must trust it first. We often hear people say, if only I could feel the love of God to me personally, I should repent. My sorrow would be full and indignant; I should turn from sin with a sense of self-reproach; I should never be slack in obedience, never weary in prayer. My whole life would sustain itself with a new strength, or rather I should be sustained by the love of God always bearing me up.

But in this we deceive ourselves: and our

lot is so ordered as more surely to fulfil the Divine purposes in our probation. For we must learn that there are three states of this spiritual life. The first, in which, after our conversion, at our first awakening consciousness of God's love, we seem to pass from darkness to light. It is a change which has no like or second to it. We seem to begin a new existence; "old things are passed away, all things are become new"; and hope seems already at its aim. We seem to enter upon the promised land, upon pleasantness and peace; our hearts are quick with emotions of love and a grateful trust in His compassion. All acts of devotion, charity, self-denial, are new, refreshing, and full of delight. This may be called the state of childhood—of those who are children in the spiritual life. To them in condescension God gives, as it were, sweetness and gifts, to allure them onwards. It is a first and feeble state, the outset of the life of faith. There is another state, in which God's tried and steadfast servants dwell in Him with changeless love; and are united to Him in will

and heart with all the active powers of their spiritual life. But this is the state of angels; a last and crowning state, attained by few on earth.

Between these two is the great tract of our probation. The early childhood, with its peace and gladness is passed away, the last and mature state of stedfast love not yet attained. Meanwhile we walk by faith, in darkness and hindrances, with temptation and fear, holding out in hope against hope, persevering in simple trust. This is the state of man—of the great multitude of Christians. It is a state in which the will rests upon faith alone, firmly moving onward, as in the night; feeling its way, step by step, with hand and foot, but always moving onward, waiting for the break of day. And in this, GOD especially puts us upon trial whether we will serve Him, not for fear or bribe, but for pure love; whether we will hold out, not because it is pleasant, but because it is right; and persevere, not because it is solace or sweetness, but because it is His will. Such perseverance is

especially accepted and blessed of God. He is more honoured by a service which has no allurements by the way, than by a life full of consolation; because it is more simply rendered to Him for His own sake. Persevering love, even though it be less sensible to us, though we doubt even its existence for the faintness of its affections, is purer in His sight. If this then be our state, let us not be out of heart, but believe in His love as a point of faith; believe, I mean, not only that His love embraces us because it embraces all; but, as in our daily works we make the light of Heaven our own by the gift of sight which receives and appropriates the universal brightness of the sun, so we must believe as an object of faith, and say each one: "He loved me, and gave himself for me". Easy to say, but hard to realize those simple words. It is easier to believe that by His omnipotence God created the world, than that God loves us. For creation is a simple problem of the intellect. We can all say the world is not eternal, for then the world would be God; neither did it make itself,

for that is a contradiction ; therefore it had a maker. So far intellect masters without a doubt ; but that GOD, all holy, should love a soul all sin, this clashes with the consciousness of our own unworthiness. Nevertheless it is an object of faith, and by faith to be received.

Read it in all your lot ; interpret it by all the movements of GOD's hand, all the vicissitudes and changes of life. All are the expression, the varying discipline of love. As you bow down over your sorrows, you think them to be penal, sent in anger, signs of His departure. They are tokens of His nearness, pledges of His love. What one thing most sorely tries you ? that very thing is the trial you most need. What do you find hardest to endure ? that is the necessary yoke which your self-love would never lay upon itself. Only trust His love with your whole life and heart ; in the sharpest and sorest trials trust Him most. Look back upon your life past ; until now all has been well : all will be, to the end.

And that we may train ourselves in this trust, let us take two counsels of practice.

The one is to give yourselves to Him in a life of devotion. Some master all must serve. Sin, or the world, or self, are the lords of most men. Whatsoever we most dwell upon and prize, that we serve as a master,—nay, even worship as a god. For what is worship, but the chief devotion of our hearts? So every one of you has some creature, person, or possession, to which you give yourselves, unless you “serve the Lord Christ”. Even they who seem to have no aim in life, who drift along the dead stream of an indolent and aimless existence, even they have their supreme lord; they worship self by a service of perpetual sloth. What, then, is the governing thought of your life? Is it the love of the Son of God, or is it something below Him and of this visible world? What is the ruling fondness, or employment, or pleasure, or sin? Break from it, and give yourselves to the only Master worthy of your service. Worship the person of your Divine Lord. Realize to yourselves the personal relation in which you stand to Him. How many have no religion beyond a

book, a few transitory thoughts, a system of opinions, or a scheme of doctrine ! They realize no Person as the object of their trust and service. Even in acts of public worship, they kneel and make response, or join in chants and prayer, but have no sense of a personal relation to a Divine master. Nay, before the altar, they kneel and gaze as if no real presence was upon it. As if He had never said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Let this, then, be your first act,—to give yourselves to Him, to realize His personal presence, to seek faith in Him that sitteth upon the throne. Make yourselves intimately near to Him, by meditation on His character ; by communion with His mind and will ; by fellowship with Him in the holy sacrament of His body and blood. You, to whom this sanctuary is to-day opened, are specially invited to give yourselves to Him, by frequent and devout communion. All the gifts of grace, which from the Incarnate Son descend through the sacraments of this Church, are now offered to you. Give yourselves to

Him, for that love wherein He laid down His life for you. What more could He give for you—what less can we offer to Him again?

The other counsel is, to give yourselves for Him in active charity. I say in acts, because impulses, and emotions, plans and theories, professions, and the language of charity, are pleasant pictures, or mere deceptive sounds, nothing worth. Action alone is certainly divine. In GOD is an eternal and pure energy of love. And the life of Jesus Christ was an unceasing act of love. Imitate His life in these loud contentious days. We are fallen upon an age of controversy; and this wordy world can drown all testimony for truth, except only the witness of visible acts. Words are transient; but acts leave their token behind them. Live truths, and you need seldom speak them. Unite yourselves to the great laws of faith and of His kingdom: act on them; cleave to them through all contradiction; suffer with them, and for them; and He will keep them and you safe unto the end. After all other arguments for truth, there

remains one final testimony, which alone cannot be gainsayed. Be what you believe. It matters not where your state in life is cast : you need not be apostles or martyrs, to follow the great Love which laid down His life for His friends. The humblest and the poorest may follow in His steps. Some may make themselves poor for His sake by voluntary poverty ; others may make their poverty a voluntary state by choosing it as the best. Whatsoever be your work, whether you be a teacher catechising baptized children, or a pastor tending Christ's poor, or a father toiling for food and raiment, or a mother rearing her children in the love of God, or a brother of mercy, or a sister of charity, not only in religious profession, but by kindred, or by the love of Christ, all may give themselves for Him, by doing their daily work with the conscious motive of serving Him in love. Form to yourselves this intention ; waken up in your hearts a consciousness of His surpassing charity ; throw the whole weight of this divine motive into every act. Our lot is the revelation of His will ;

and in every duty and work belonging to our state we may say—"to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world". So far as we know, each duty as it comes may be our last ; and our present work may be the winding up of all our earthly service. Be it a pleasant or an irksome task, do it with a conscious recollection of His great Sacrifice. Your whole life may thus be penetrated with the intention to live unto Him, and to give yourselves for Him, in requital of His love for you.

It is but a little time, and this fretful, fevered life shall be over ; a few more years of trial and care, of sorrows and fears ; a few more temptations, and a few more masteries ; a few more partings, a few more graves, and our service will be done, our warfare ended. Then shall the mystery of His grace be fulfilled. And when the sovereign love, reigning in Heaven, and attracting all the world unto itself, shall have accomplished the number of God's elect ; when that mystical number shall stand before the throne, and all

shall fall down and worship Him with perfect adoration, even there, in heavenly places, this shall be still the eternal thanksgiving of saints :
“ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for our sakes.”

